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Araucanians SG4

T 622 but he managed to converse, and he asked me if the Southern Tehuelches were not a queer lot, for he had heard that they killed men as readily as they would guanaco. From what casimiro had reported, I was already inclined to respect this cacique, who had expressed such readiness to protect or avenge a guest of the Indians, and closer acquaintance only strengthened my regard for him. He was a fine-looking man, with a pleasant, intelligent countenance, which was not belied by his disposition. He never, to my knowledge, exceeded sobriety, and was good-humoured and self-possessed; though if once roused to fight, his resolute and determined courage was well known. He was skilled at all sorts of handicraft, and was always busily employed. He was generous to a fault—ready to give away everything if asked for it, and often without the asking. His great weakness was an inveterate fondness for gambling, which, together with his lavish good-nature, eventually impoverished him greatly. At his request, I informed Casimiro and Orkeke T 622 that he desired to hold a parlemento. Accordingly, the ● 623 chiefs all proceeded to a place agreed upon between the two camps, where they took their seats in a circle on the grass. After various harangues from Hinchel and others, it was resolved that Casimiro should be elected chief in command of the Tehuelches; and that after the expiration of the young guanaco season, all present, together with those expected from the neighbourhood of the Chupat, should proceed to a place called Teckel, and thence march to Las Manzanas, to unite there with the Araucanian Indians, some of whom had already communicated with us, and had promised to forward T A my letters, *vid* Las Manzanas, to Rio Negro.

648 The relations between the Tehuelches or Tsonecas of Patagonia and the Araucanian Indians of Las Manzanas had been previously by no means of a pacific nature. It has been already mentioned that near the Sengel we passed the scene of a fierce battle between them. Tankelow bore still the scars of seven lance wounds received in a battle when he was

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at the end of some marvellous tale, would command me to tell it again. This was no easy task, considering the freaks which my imagination usually played without restraint, in the progress of the narrative. In no long time, however, I learned to imitate the prudence of boys who turn down the leaves of their books, or of Indians who break down the shrubs and twigs along a new path, by taking special note of my deviations, — a sort of mental dog's-ear, or way-mark, interposed at the point of departure. It was not difficult to retrace the way at their bidding, and give them the whole journey, to its minutest turnings.

The excitement and dissatisfaction which I had remarked and dreaded appeared to have died away, when one night I had startling evidence that it was still active. At the usual hour of rest, as I was expecting every moment to be ordered, like a dog, to my cold corner of the lodge, a gigantic, ill-favored fellow made his appearance, and exchanged, in an under tone, a few words with the chief. Without comprehending a word that was passing, I could see, by their significant glances, that the colloquy concerned me, and that it boded me no good. The giant soon disappeared. The chief sat a moment in silence, rose, and ordered me to follow him. To the question where he was taking me, no other answer was vouchsafed than "Come along!" We had proceeded but a short distance when I observed a group of Indians sitting in a circle on the earth. The sight almost froze my blood. The most dismal apprehensions seized upon me. There needed no wizard to tell the import of the scene. The *fatal ring*, so much to be dreaded by those who are cast upon the tender mercies of savages was set for me. The suddenness of it aggravated the blow. It

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almost paralyzed thought, and arrested my powers of motion. The catastrophe of the tragedy, I thought, is at hand, unless arrested by the interposition of a higher power. In my way to the dreaded spot I sent up a silent supplication that He whose eye marked all my footsteps, and whose power was all-sufficient for my protection against utmost peril, would keep me in that hour of my "extremity," and make it, according to the proverb, His "opportunity."

Arrived at the ring, I found the Indians squatting on the ice and snow awaiting us, with their cutlasses and large knives tucked under their blankets, — weapons they never carry except when they expect to use them. I was ordered within, and seated myself as near as possible to the chief. They presently began talking in rotation, as they sat, in their own tongue. Their words were mainly unintelligible; but the deadly malice that flashed from the eyes, kindled in the features, and animated the gesticulations, of some of them, left no room to doubt the significance of their speech. A part of them were clamorous against my life, as they had constantly been. Others appeared to be irresolute, and said little; but, so far as could be discovered, no voice was raised in my favor. The chief spoke last, — I hung upon his lips, and anxiously scrutinized his face and action. I gathered that he was in favor of holding on a while longer, and using me as a decoy, to lure others within their power; reminding them of my promises, — the quantities of rum and tobacco they were to get from me, the trinkets destined for women and children. He was for getting the booty before cutting the matter short with me. His remarks evidently had great weight with the council,

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●623 and exerted a soothing effect on all of them. At this point I thought it a meet season to impress upon their minds that I was of some consequence in the world, and asked leave to speak for myself, which was granted. Thereupon I launched forth in an oration, the chief acting as interpreter, and retailing it to the circle sentence by sentence:

"Buenos Senores! Me mucho grande Americane capitan, mismo commodant mucho mass, mucha barca, mucha galeta, muchos soldados, muchos marinarios. Me tene mucho mucho big guns, bastante poquito mismo bastante, cutlass, pistols mucho bastante. Vuestros hombres buenos per me, mi marinarios, mi soldados, buenos per vos. Othro corso usted malo rumpe me," &c. &c. &c. In such a jumble of Spanish, English and Indian, duly set off with grimace and gesture, I gave them to understand that they were dealing with no inferior personage, but with one who was at home as good as the president; one having at command abundance of steamships and sailing vessels of all sorts, with soldiers and mariners, big guns and little guns, pistols and cutlasses. That if they were good to me they would receive good from me and mine; but that, if they did me any harm, men would come from North America in numbers as incalculable as the hairs of their heads, and kill every mother's son of them. Furthermore, if they would take me to some white settlement, whether American, English, French or Spanish, I would order the white people to give them rum, tobacco, flour, rice, sugar and tea. *Of course* the white men could do no less than obey, and they would thus be enabled to indulge themselves in luxuries almost without limit.

It was evident, at a glance, that my speech was seasonable,

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and took effect in the right quarter. Their eyes stood out with wonder, and the sternness of their countenances was relaxed. They acquiesced in the proposal to postpone final action for the present, and see what could be made out of me before doing their worst. In a few days, they said, they would take me to "Holland;" but, no matter what time was limited, that "undiscovered country" seemed continually further off, — "a name" without any "local habitation." Their conduct in this was determined, as I was afterwards assured, by the fact that they were entirely undecided what to do with me. They longed for the good things I had told them of, and their greedy appetites could only be satisfied by taking me to a white settlement. On the other hand, they were painfully suspicious that I meant to give them the slip, and dreaded the result of bringing me into the vicinity of any settlement; while, at the same time, my grandiloquent assumptions and lofty threats made them shrink from the thought of doing me serious harm. The big guns and little guns greatly disturbed their imaginations. In short, I seemed to them an ugly customer — bad to keep, and bad to get rid of. They temporized, therefore, promised and hesitated, and postponed, and promised again. There was no use in trying to hurry their movements. So I gave them line upon line, seeking every opportunity to deepen the troublesome impression that they assumed a mighty responsibility when they made me a prisoner, and that their welfare depended greatly on the issue.

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484 as before, but if he says nothing, then all know that for the while they are to remain in that place. Their camp site is usually in the area to which they know that the game has moved. When the chief sees that meat is running low he gives orders at sundown, in the same manner as when ordering a move to a new camp site, that the horses are to be brought in at some specified time on the following day. Once this has been done he harangues them once more, this time on horseback, and assigns the hunting stations and all else which each group of hunters is to [462] do. Some women go with them to load the game, the men being unwilling to do even this chore. The tents are left standing and in them [92] the remaining women, children, and disabled Indians wait. At sundown 622 they return to their tents once more. The chief's authority is limited to these few activities only, and he never for any crime punishes his people, although in the aforementioned matters in which obedience is required it is never found that they do not fulfill his orders faithfully. When 721 he wants to wage war on his neighbors, or on some other group which may ● 623 have insulted their honor, this can only be carried into effect with the approval of his chief subordinates, to which effect they meet together in the chief's tent. The latter mulls over and explains the wrongs which have been done, the way in which they can be avenged, forces, ease and difficulties entailed in the waging of the war. The members of the council confer about the matter and either approve or reject the proposal of the chief, who does not take offense if he is overruled. Usually the chief's bid for war is approved and the council merely discusses ways and means of waging it, and the time of its commencing. This discussion 721 often lasts some days. Once they are agreed on the matter of beginning 203 hostilities the chief, on three successive nights, shouts the news in a loud voice from his tent so as to inform his people of the declaration of war, the time which has been set for its [72] commencement, the manner in which it is to be conducted, who are the enemies, the cause of the war, and they are warned to be wary and prepared.

721 One of the principle causes for the declaration of war is the fol- 423 lowing: Each chief's territory has fixed boundaries, and no Indian may cross into the territory of a neighbor without obtaining permission from 484 the latter to do so. The Indian who wishes to obtain such permission [202] must make three smoke signals, and until he is answered by three other smoke signals he may not approach the encampment. Once he has been answered he must give an account of himself to the chief in whose territory he is, telling his reasons for coming, be it only because he is passing through or because he wishes to take up residence there. If the chief so